

**TESTIMONY TO THE  
THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
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Mr. Chairman, Mr. Lantos and members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify on Kosovo. I will focus my remarks on the security situation in Kosovo and U.S. and NATO operations there. This is a year in which critical decisions likely will be made about Kosovo's performance on UN-endorsed standards and its final status. How these decisions are made can be expected to have a significant impact on security and stability in Kosovo and the region.

As President Bush has repeatedly emphasized, we went into the Balkans together with our NATO Allies and we will go out together. The security situation in the region has changed, but NATO's commitment has not. NATO's approach remains one of adjusting force levels in response to changing security needs. A key objective is to enable Kosovo and its neighbors to transition from being consumers of security, to being genuine contributors to security and stability, not only in the region, but beyond.

**Developments in Kosovo**

The overall situation in Kosovo remains fragile, but calm. I recently visited Kosovo, and was impressed by progress made to date. There is still work to be done to get the economy up and running, and to facilitate refugee returns. The view of the military and political leaders I met with is that the longer there is uncertainty about Kosovo's future status, the more volatile security conditions could become.

I am encouraged by the capable leadership of Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, Soren Jessen Petersen, and his deputy Ambassador Larry Rossin. Also, a noteworthy level of political maturity has been demonstrated by some of Kosovo's leaders including Former Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj who voluntarily turned himself over to The Hague.

The principal challenge in Kosovo has been to establish the rule of law and help the Kosovo government (Provisional Institutions of Self Government – PISG) rebuild institutions capable of providing a safe, secure and prosperous environment for all of its inhabitants.

The UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is responsible for civilian administration in Kosovo, including the maintenance of civil law and order.

UNMIK has taken a number of steps to strengthen its performance and accelerate turning over key functions to the PISG to reduce dependency and strengthen lines of accountability. Prime Minister Kosumi and his government appear to be taking the standards process seriously and recognize that the path ahead will be challenging.

UNMIK's relationship with KFOR is strong; both are working together with the 6,000 plus multi-ethnic Kosovo Police Service, KPS. It is the KPS that increasingly must take on responsibility for being the first responder in dealing with threats to law and order. Kosovo has come a long way since March of 2004 when communication between security agencies, KFOR and local authorities was weak and random. KFOR has been working with local security organizations as they build up their capacity to ensure that Kosovo does not become a safe haven for extremism, terrorism or criminal elements.

## **KFOR**

KFOR is tasked with building a secure environment to facilitate democracy – including deterring renewed hostility, ensuring public safety and order, supporting humanitarian assistance, and coordinating with UNMIK.

In 1999, KFOR's initial force totaled 40,000 troops. There are now less than 18,000 troops on the ground - roughly 1,800 from the U.S. The California National Guard under the command of Brigadier General William Wade has been in charge of KFOR's Multi-National Brigade East Sector (MNB-E) since March on a one year rotation. The California Guard is supported by units from Ohio, Indiana, Kansas, and Pennsylvania.

KFOR responded swiftly to the outbreak of mob violence in March of last year, but there was substantial room for improvement. A NATO "lessons learned" study highlighted areas where KFOR could increase its effectiveness. In particular, it assessed that KFOR troops need to be less constrained by national controls and restrictions related to crowd and riot control. U.S. forces, unhindered by these limitations, performed admirably during the crisis.

Since then, SACEUR (Supreme Allied Commander Europe), General Jones, has made substantial progress getting nations to lift "caveats" on use of forces. The Commander of KFOR is now a true commander - rather than a coordinator. Units have received civil disorder training, and regularly exercise using robust rules of engagement.

Also, as part of NATO's transformation effort, it is addressing the usability of forces as well as mobility and improved "tooth to tail" ratios. Only about one third of KFOR troops are deployable for key military tasks, while the rest serves in supporting roles such as logistics.

## **Transforming NATO's Presence in Kosovo**

General Jones wants KFOR to become more proactive, more mobile and more capable of concentrating forces where they are required for operations. He has proposed moving to a Task Force structure where KFOR can become:

- More capable, effective and responsive with more efficient command and control;
- Less hindered by caveats;
- Streamlined to avoid duplicative structures;
- More usable with improved “tooth-to-tail” ratios; and
- Potentially leaner.

KFOR Commander, General Yves de Kermabon, has said that he would welcome a Task Force structure. We hope that all allies will soon endorse the KFOR Task Force structure at the upcoming NATO Defense Ministerial in June.

### **Moving to a Regional Approach to Force Structure and Deployment**

Finally, it is important to note that we have adopted a regional approach to managing military forces in the Balkans. All U.S. forces serving in the region are under the operational control of ADM Michael Mullen who commands NATO’s Joint Forces Command based in Naples, Italy. This arrangement provides greater flexibility to move forces around the region as needed. Under the Joint Operations Area (JOA) approach, NATO conducts a Periodic Mission Review (PMR) every six months to evaluate the security situation on the ground and make recommendations on force levels. The Review is submitted to the North Atlantic Council (NAC) for decision.

The JOA provides for the use of reserve forces at the tactical, operational and strategic levels. For example, during the March riots last year in Kosovo, NATO was able to surge an additional 3,000 troops within a few days, the first arriving in less than 24 hours. Similar surges occurred before the elections last October and in March of this year - the period of the indictment of former Prime Minister Haradinaj.

While future force requirements in Kosovo ultimately will be driven by the situation on the ground, the U.S. is working with Allies to restructure KFOR now to meet more effectively the challenges that could arise during Kosovo’s future status negotiations and afterwards. We will continue to honor our Alliance commitments. At the same time, President Bush has stated we wish to hasten the day when NATO completes the military mission in Kosovo as it has in Bosnia. That means building the capacities of local institutions such as the Kosovo Police Service to maintain law and order. All local institutions must have an increasing role in building a more secure environment in Kosovo, especially as UNMIK turns responsibility over to the Kosovars.